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go to the theatre to see ; but something that, under the conditions of the stage (e. g., the presence of an audience, and the actual knowledge on the part of everybody that it is all unreal), shall produce that semblance of reality which we call a theatrical illusion. The notion that this is to be got by an actor's turning his back to the audience, or talking in the same tone he would use in the street, is a great mistake. All that Mr. Lewes has to say on this subject is excellent. In reading his book, however, it has occurred to us that he has not made sufficiently clear the distinction between the various meanings which the word "natural" may have when applied to acting. It may mean according to the nature of the character represented ; it may mean according to that nature *under some* of the conditions ; it may mean according to the character represented *under all the conditions* ; it may mean according to the nature of the speaker himself. In the case he refers to, for instance, the appearance of the ghost in "Hamlet," to say that the manner of the actor who takes the part is "natural," may mean that the speaker thinks that his behavior is exactly what his own would be under the circumstances ; or that his behavior is exactly what he imagines Hamlet's would be in meeting a ghost—or what he imagines Hamlet's would be on meeting the ghost of his father ; or he may mean that the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare, meeting the ghost, under all the given circumstances of the play, would behave just as the actor does. If competent judges form the last impression, we call the acting good ; if not, it is certainly bad ; though it may clearly, in some sense, be "natural" in all the supposed cases. This may seem like merely verbal criticism ; but in talking about the drama, as in talking about any other art, criticism is impossible without an exact use of language. In conclusion, we may say that we have found every line of Mr. Lewes's book interesting and instructive, and hope that its success may lead him in future editions to enlarge and develop it into a systematic treatise on the art. We are satisfied that such a work as this would do something to lift the English drama out of the slough in which it is now lying.

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- 4.—*Thoreau: His Life and Aims. A Study.* By H. A. PAGE, author of "Life of Thomas De Quincey," "Memoir of Hawthorne," etc. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co. 1877. 24mo, pp. x.-234.

TILL within a few years, Mr. Page tells us in his preface, the name of Thoreau stood to him for "morbid sentiment, weak rebellion, and

contempt for society." A particular study on which he was engaged led him into frequent contact with Thoreau, and he became a convert to the Thoreau cult. Like all converts, he is an enthusiast in his new religion, and he desires, through this book, to lead the rest of the world to the knowledge of the true faith. The appearance of any new study on this subject naturally suggests a comparison with Mr. Lowell's masterly criticism published a few years since, and Mr. Channing's rhapsody, called "*Thoreau: the Poet-Naturalist*." Mr. Lowell's estimate of the poet-naturalist was that he was neither a poet nor a naturalist, but an egotist, and, if any one wants to see this undoubtedly strong aspect of Thoreau's character strongly painted, he will find it done for him in Mr. Lowell's criticism; on the other hand, any one, who wants to know to what injudicious lengths of admiration friendship may carry a critic, has only to consult Mr. Channing's volume. Mr. Page has avoided these extremes, and attempted a picture of the recluse of Walden in such colors as shall not revolt the common-sense of the reader, but shall at the same time stimulate his interest. We confess to finding the picture, on the whole, a little tame; we do not discover in the man much that, if he had not lived in the woods, and talked the Emersonian dialect, would attract our attention. Mr. Page has certainly presented him at his best, and yet his best is, after all, but ordinary. His English is bad English; his thoughts the thoughts of an uneducated man, unpardonable in a man really cultivated. What can be thought of a man who returned Kane's "*Arctic Voyage*" to a friend with the remark that "most of the phenomena noted might be observed in Concord?" Mr. Page thinks this was merely a "playful expression" of his conviction of "the indifference of all places;" but there seems to be no reason for such a supposition. Thoreau was really indifferent on the subject, or rather he was so thoroughly convinced of the superiority of any place which he had happened to select as a domicile, to all other places, that he probably really persuaded himself that he knew as much already on the subject of polar phenomena as it was necessary for anybody to know. Otherwise it is impossible to explain his life. If he thought that the world had anything to teach him, why did he undertake to instruct the world without studying it, without traveling, or acquainting himself with other parts of it than were to be found on the shores of Walden Pond?

It is difficult to prove, even by extracts, that what other people admire is not worthy of admiration; and no doubt for another generation there will be persons here and there who will continue to find

matter for study in Thoreau's writings. But we fancy the number will steadily diminish as time goes on, and it becomes more and more manifest that he was, after all, but an eccentric imitator of Emerson. He procured a distinction during his life, as any one might now, by oddity. Diogenes in his barrel, reducing his wants to a little sunlight, is the great progenitor of the eccentric school of all ages ; and it is a school that always attracts attention, because it is always a surprise to the generality of mankind that people can live in barrels and deny themselves everything that the world holds dear. But for a complete success there must be something more than a barrel and a man.

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5.—*The American Decisions*, containing all the Cases of General Value and Authority decided in the Courts of the Several States from the Earliest Issue of the State Reports to the Year 1869. Compiled and annotated by JOHN PROFFATT, LL. D. Vol. I. San Francisco : A. L. Bancroft & Co.

It is difficult to conceive a more important or useful work to the bar of the United States than this, which has been undertaken by an editor of considerable experience and reputation, and the publication of which is in the hands of the most important and enterprising among the publishers of the Pacific coast.

The plan, in a word, is to give the whole body of the American law, as created and preserved in our reports from 1764 to 1869, in one series of volumes, probably not exceeding one hundred in all, and in this comparatively small compass that there shall be found all that is useful and interesting to the bench or the bar, and which is now only to be found in some two thousand volumes of American reports, some of which are out of print, or so nearly so as to command an almost fabulous price when offered for sale, and which, apart from the difficulty of collecting them as a whole in one library, have become so expensive as to utterly forbid their ownership except by the few older and more successful lawyers of our great cities and by a few of the public libraries of the United States. And yet in these reports of the various States, and not elsewhere, is to be found that unwritten Code of Common Law which we derived from Great Britain, and which has, through the decisions of our courts, for more than one hundred years, been extended and altered to suit the necessities and changes of our commerce and the increase of our business, population, habits, and wealth, until, as a Commercial Code, governing the every-day transactions of business-men, it has become